

Town of Montville  
**Montville Law Enforcement Feasibility Committee**  
**Special Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, February 11, 2015**  
Town Council Chambers – Montville Town Hall – 6:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Pike called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. after establishing a quorum.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. Roll Call

Present were William Bucko, Jeff Buebendorf, Joseph DesPasquale (6:40 p.m.), Robert Giffen, Victor Lenda, Timothy May, and Wills Pike. Also present were Lt. Leonard Bunnell and Resident State Trooper Sgt. James Smith.

4. Presentations

a. Union Executive Board Members

Chairman Pike prefaced the presentation by the Union Executive Board Members by stating that the union was invited so that the Committee could hear from "those who run the Town." He said the charge of the Committee by the Town Council was to identify the advantages and disadvantages of an independent police department versus the current Resident State Trooper Program. Chairman Pike further stated that the Committee is in the process of finishing up its findings and were interested in the viewpoint of the Town police officers concerning the matter.

The Union Executive Board Members, Robin Salvatore, Karen Moorehead, Joseph Kondash, and Addison Saffioti. The following is a summary of the presentation begun by Officer Moorehead and questions posed to the Union members by the Committee.

Buildings: The Public Safety Building is underutilized—the Lock-up and Evidence areas and Interview rooms cannot be used if not by order of the Resident Trooper. The officers have been told not to use the interview rooms. Currently, interviews are conducted at a person's home or the interview room at the Troop E Barracks. In order to record an interview of a person in custody, it is done at Troop E.

Staffing: Per discussion, it was asked if the Union Board would support a Chief of Police versus a Resident State Trooper run department. The response was for a Chief of Police if the process

was done properly but there was no confidence that the Town would "do it right." At present, there are twenty-four (24) officers but 10-25 more officers are needed to handle the increased workload. It was noted that every year, Lt. Bunnell has asked for additional staff but that has not come to fruition. In order to make an independent police department work it would require a 4 - 2 schedule and a pay increase—Town officers are the lowest paid in the State. With the 4 – 2 schedule, an officer would work less days off and less days per week but with the last day off the officer would be able to prepare for the next day on and satisfy the relevant safety issue. It was reported that the State Police work a 5 – 3 schedule. The scheduling is also integral in the shift that is worked.

The Town police staff includes eight (8) patrolmen, six (6) supervisors who work seven (7) days a week and creates an overtime issue. More patrolmen are needed and the situation is exasperated when an officer is out on leave. The State Police is available to support the Town police if occurrences happen. The question was asked how often the State Police assist the Town police. It was explained that officers are sometimes "pulled" sent out town to Salem or Bozrah, for example, when the Troop does not have coverage. The Town police then fill their gap. In addition, mutual-aid agreements are in place with surrounding towns for certain events such as Sailfest in New London. Part-time police personnel no longer exist and they were unable to handle investigations. When the department is overloaded with cases from the State or by dispatch, some calls may be held for the next shift. It was noted that the Town department has grown while the State Police has shrunk. Officer Moorehead described her functions when she is not serving as the DARE officer during the summer months when school is not in session.

The discussion on staffing continued with talk about the liability factor when a Town officer serves as backup in a mutual-aid situation. It was deemed that authorization for the same came under the umbrella of the mutual-aid agreement that exists with the other town(s). The expansion of the Town of Montville with new businesses, hotels, and the casino were described as factors in the increased workload of the police staff.

Interviews/Reports: The Union officials were asked how much time and efficiency was lost concerning the issue of interviews, as discussed earlier. It was stated that the interviewing process would be much more efficient if done at the Public Safety Building particularly the double effort as far as reporting. Right now, the officers process prisoners at Troop E and go back to the Town to prepare their reports. Discussion followed regarding the reporting system that is supposed to be a paperless one. Sgt. Smith is currently working to get the reporting system to work as it should. He stated that the State is reluctant to give unfettered access to non-State employees. Presently, the e-paper system, the IMC Records Management System, cannot be used by the Town due to contractual restraints. The CAD and dispatch have been dispatching to two (2) masters but reporting to one. Officer Salvatore commented that the State reporting system is not as good as the one used by the Town that has the ability to correct the entries of individuals. The State system

does not have this capability nor can it be merged with the Town reporting system. Additionally, the State system will not allow access from a Town police vehicle. Sgt. Smith elaborated by saying that the State system is departmentalized and that access to NexGen is State controlled. Although reports can now be done from police vehicles, access to the Town database is not available.

Workload: Per continued discussion, a question was asked as to whether an independent police department would change or help with workloads. With the proper administration in place, it was said that those who are now tasked with administrative duties would be available to go on calls and Sgt. Smith's involvement with the police staff has been viewed as positive. Officer Moorehead spoke about 3-4 accident reconstructions and fatalities that were taken from the department. She discoursed on the trained officers who are not being utilized for sexual assaults, fatalities et al. According to Sgt. Smith, the decisions to redirect/override assignments is being determined by senior State officials who want the final say if an issue arises regarding accountability. The State Major Crimes Unit handles the bigger, prominent cases. With an independent police force, all of this issues would go away and sever the ties with the State.

Under an independent police department, it was stated that more than two (2) detectives on staff would be needed and those currently in that capacity are not being allowed to do detective work. Mr. DePasquale recommended that the Town employ a minimum of three (3) detectives and a sergeant and that personnel with a specific skill set get continual training for the performance of their duties. Training would eliminate the fear of failure according to Officer Salvatore. A current failure with the Resident State Trooper system is not being allowed to use a police dog from another town if it is not a 'state' dog. Officer Moorehead gave an example of this need by talking about a fictitious case involving a missing child. She said in that situation the Town would have to get a "favor" from another Town or obtain a State patrol dog from Danielson. This situation is deemed critical as well as a safety concern. Sgt. Smith commented that State requires a state trained dog because of potential liability issue and testifying purposes.

Protocol for Assignments: A question arose as to who makes the call to reassign Town police outside of town. Officer Moorehead described an incident when she was assigned to search a prisoner in Danielson. She said that she could make the statement that she cannot perform the duty if there is a more pressing issue. But on the flip side of this scenario, the State can ask to "use" her but she cannot ask for assistance from another Town. As far as the assignment of duties, dispatchers look at the location of an officer. If the Town police are near and available, they would be assigned the call. Calls dispatched from outside the area was discussed as to how the call is processed. Local dispatchers and Town police have a better knowledge of the vicinity that would minimize lag time when responding to a call.

Conclusion: Officer Kondash commented that the plan over the next 3-5 years should be personnel, training, equipment, and transition. A trained chief and captain should be a consideration. Officer Salvatore added that funds for the same are driven by the number of arrests. She spoke about how the State benefits from the work the Town police does with the 'Click it, Ticket It' initiative.

The Committee will document its findings to the Town Council. Initially, the findings will be sent to the officers by email to digest, review, and consider so that objective, solid information is given to the Town. The Union was asked to document why, how, and what needs must be done to make the change to an independent police force happen. It was stated that with the Town everything costs money. Businesses and families who come to Montville look at the school system and the crime rate. Officer DePasquale asked whether there have been inconsistencies over the years with the Resident Trooper System regarding leadership and management. The Union Board stated that a chief of police should have the training that goes along with the title. In Montville, the chief of police is the Mayor, not the Resident Trooper who is the buffer between the Town Police and the lieutenant at Troop E. It was also said that Lt. Bunnell does the work of a chief.

Chairman Pike asked if it is difficult for the police with the every two-year change of the Resident State Trooper. The morale of the officers affects the productivity and the Resident Trooper must march to the orders of the State Police. According to the Union members, some resident troopers have had a vested interest in the Town while "others have done their own thing." According to the Union, the consensus of the staff like their jobs, the people they work, and the sense of cohesiveness. Some have invested years in the Town and although some programs have been lost such as 'Eddie Eagle' active programs like 'Ride-Along' continue.

The Union was assured that the Town's past history of "no follow through" and "reactive instead of proactive" and other types of negative was dispelled in the Committee that was hand-picked by the Town Council. They were told that their voices would be heard. Mr. Bucko asked if the Union took direction from the Town Public Safety Commission (PSC). The answer was "no" as the Commission has no jurisdiction. Mr. DePasquale then asked if a police commission with statutory authority would be beneficial and the response was, "It would depend upon the chief." Mr. May asked if the Public Safety Commission could be charged to do certain tasks or come before the Town Council for informational purposes with their recommendations on the topic of an independent police force versus the Resident Trooper Program. At present, the recommendations of the PSC must go through the Mayor.

The Union Board was thanked for their presentation and was told that a lot was learned from what was said this evening. Mr. Buebendorf asked the Union to prepare a synopsis, to include positives and negatives, for going forward with an independent police force or staying with the Resident Trooper System. He asked that the question be addressed, "What needs to be done to make it

successful?" Mr. Bucko commented that he had given four (4) extra copies of *Guidelines to Starting a Police Department* to the Union. Chairman Pike said that a report on the Committee findings would be given to Town Council in April.

*After the presentation, the Committee took a break at 8:32 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 8:41 p.m.*

5. Alterations to the Agenda -- *None*

6. Approval of:

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of February 3, 2015

Motion made by Mr. Lenda; seconded by Mr. Giffen to approve the regular meeting minutes of February 3, 2015; discussion, none. Voice vote, 7-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

7. Remarks from the Public Relating to matters on the Agenda with a three-minute limit -- *None*

This item was incorrectly identified on agenda as 6.b.

8. Unfinished Business

a. Review of independent Police Department studies and reports.

1) Presentation of Findings

Lt. Bunnell spoke about the underutilization of the Public Safety Building that he said is still available for higher level crime for individuals that need to be audiotaped. If an officer needs to audiotape, he/she must interact with a detective. The outside interview room by the lobby is used to receive people who are reporting on the system or as a witness. Lt. Bunnell reported that the Investigation Room, Evidence Room, and Holding Cell are underused as well as the detectives on the follow-up to crimes. He also commented that there is an application for the Ride-Along Program that is available day or evening. Facts and figures regarding the GPS, software updates, recordkeeping, fingerprinting et al were discussed.

9. New Business – *None*

10. Remarks from the Public with a three-minute limit – *None*

11. Remarks from Committee Members -- *None*

The meeting concluded with the Committee's plan for completing its findings and putting it in final form for presentation to the Town Council. It was noted that time should be spent working on the final report and the Committee presentation. Discussion concluded that the Mayor and the Public Safety Commission would not be asked to appear before the Committee. Staffing was outlined a critical for a proposed independent police force. The Committee agreed to meet next on February 17.

**a. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Pike at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Gloria J. Gathers  
Recording Secretary, Town of Montville